

## **NEED CERTIFICATION IN THE FIELD OF SPORT**

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**ABSTRACT:** The need for stronger credentialing in the field of sports is recommended because of the complex issues modern sports face. A brief overview of the development of professional credentials/licensure is provided to set the rationale for the need for accreditation in the field of sports. The research reviewed supports the need for accreditation of both the individual professionals that serve sports and athletes and the schools and institutions as well. This research points to the similar developmental path that other licensed/credentialed professions have followed leading up to their regulation. Accreditation by the International association is offered as an answer to this need for certification.

**KEY WORDS:** Sports Accreditation, History of Professional Accreditation.

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## **NECESIDAD DE ACREDITACIÓN EN EL ÁMBITO DEL DEPORTE**

**RESUMEN:** Debido a los complejos problemas que enfrentan deportivo moderno se recomienda la necesidad de credenciales más fuerte en el campo del deporte. Una breve reseña de la evolución de las credenciales profesionales/ licenciatura para establecer la justificación de la necesidad de acreditación en el campo del deporte. La investigación revisada apoya la necesidad de acreditación tanto de los profesionales individuales que sirven a los deportes y los deportistas como también en las escuelas e instituciones. Esta investigación apunta a la vía de desarrollo similar a otras profesiones de licenciados/ acreditados han seguido previo a su regulación. La acreditación de la Asociación Internacional se ofrece como una respuesta a esta necesidad de certificación.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Acreditación Deportes, Historia de Acreditación Profesional.

## **PRECISA DE CERTIFICAÇÃO NO DOMÍNIO DO DESPORTO**

**RESUMO:** A necessidade de credenciamento forte no campo dos esportes é recomendado por causa das questões complexas moderno rosto esportes. Uma breve descrição do desenvolvimento de credenciais profissionais / licenciamento é fornecida para definir a justificativa para a necessidade de acreditação na área de esportes. A pesquisa revisada apoia a necessidade de credenciamento de ambos os profissionais individuais que servem esportes e atletas e as escolas e instituições também. Esta pesquisa aponta para o caminho semelhante de desenvolvimento que outros profissionais licenciados / credenciados seguiram levando até sua regulamentação. Acreditação pela Associação Internacional é oferecido como uma resposta a essa necessidade de certificação.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Esportes Acreditação, História da Acreditação profissional.

Sports hold a unique and powerful place in all cultures throughout the world and it has occupied this place for as long as social history has been recorded. Here in Mexico, the ancient Mayan Civilization played a sport, Ulama that resembles what we could describe today as a combination of field hockey and racquetball. It was a team sport played with a heavy (9lb) rubber ball. It was a very aggressive game and because the ball was hurled at such high speeds, serious injuries were frequent. Severe bruising was an expected result of play, but crushed skulls, broken bones and even deaths were frequent during each contest. It has been reported historically that the most outstanding player of the match received the high social honor of being sacrificed for his excellent performance. (Leyenaar, 2001, Taladoire, 2001) We may look back throughout the centuries at such a game and call it barbaric, but is it much different from sports today?

Violent injuries, dangerous games, harmful equipment, one would even say our athletes sacrifice their lives and well being for their sport and our pleasure just like the Mayan champions. Is that last statement so outrageous? That athletes sacrifice their life and well being for OUR PLEASURE? Examine the life expectancies of professional athletes and the statistics are saddening on the toll that is paid by athletes. They die at younger ages than the averages of others in their societies. Athletes often spend a life after sports with a body crippled and in pain, and possibly in agonizing mental and emotional existence for the rest of their life. What about the effects of an athlete's use of steroids or other performance enhancing drugs? Common medical knowledge dictates that the long term effects of putting these substances in our bodies has to have negatives effects on longevity at the very least, let alone quality of life. Consider as well the career consequences that athletes often pay for playing a sport at the highest levels their whole life. What career has the athlete been prepared for except to be an athlete in that sport? Sport at the highest levels is a young man's game, so what career, what job is available for the athlete after their playing days? And, even if there are employment opportunities provided for the athlete, have they been prepared to succeed at such careers? The answer universally is NO. So, you see, the best athlete's, those who compete at the highest levels of their sport are still sacrifices to society. Maybe not in the direct way that was undertaken by the Mayan's but in indirect ways in a lifetime spent in payment of their service. Maybe we should consider the Mayan practice of sacrificing the best players as not so barbaric after all? Maybe the Mayans were saving those athletes from a life of future pain and suffering?

History gives us a wide perspective on our current social behavior. A perspective we need to keep improving our social practices. This historical perspective tells us that more than ever this is a time when schools and professionals who serve sports have an opportunity to intervene, educate, and prevent harmful practices in sports.

Just like sports has advanced in the techniques and the equipment used to excel at the games, our professional knowledge of how to best serve the athlete has advanced tremendously as well. I dare say our scientific knowledge of how to serve sport and athletes has far outpaced the advances that the games themselves have achieved. The games we serve are frequently played in the same fundamental way and under many of the same rules that have existed for centuries. Consider for moment the world's most popular sports. Football or soccer, baseball, basketball is all fundamentally the same games as when they were invented. The uniforms look different, the athletes may be bigger, faster and stronger, but the games themselves are unchanged. That can't be said of the science of sport. The field of sport psychology is said to have its roots in the late 1800's. In 1925 Coleman Griffith first started teaching about sport psychology at the University of Illinois in the United States. (Green, 2012) The field of Kinesiology has its beginning even more recently in history. The first department of kinesiology was started in 1967 at the University of Waterloo in Canada. (Hoffman, 2008) The games remain the same but science advances to improve the sport. History tells us that opportunity will remain for professionals to keep advancing sports.

History in its application of studying current events as they impact today's world offers a very interesting view of the influence of sport across the globe. In today's world with so much division and tension existing between nations the potential of sport as a unifier of people is singular in its power to bring nations together. I cannot think of another social behavior that has this power of uniting people that sport has and accomplishes. The world plays football or soccer and competes for The World Cup. The Olympic and Paralympics games brings the world's nations together to compete in sports. I challenge you to consider any other cultural element that exhibits this power of unification that sports has throughout the history of mankind. Consider, sadly, that religious beliefs do not unify diverse societies, in fact, we are witnessing in today's world so much tension and violence in the name of religious fervor. Certainly politics, like religion does not often unify nations, as frequently there becomes no agreement in the political debates among countries. Trade and economics, have proven to be tenuous bonds that unite societies. When the self-interest of trade and economic gain are lost so is lost the bond between nations. Sadly, even literature and entertainment are not effective at bonding societies together as nations reject these imports from other countries as philosophically adverse to their social customs or beliefs. Even academics and science often fail to unite cultures as both meet resistance because of fundamental social or religious belief systems that run counter to academic and scientific imports and discoveries. Only sports stands out as a social element that nations and divergent societies have been able to share and use to bond.

In spite of this great influence of sports, the study and research accomplishments in the field of sports are often looked upon within schools and universities as not as serious as what is often viewed as the 'pure' academic disciplines of mathematics,

physics, chemistry, sociology, psychology and so forth. But, as I am pointing out, consider the social impact sport has and its power within society. The study, research and application of sports need not and should not be considered second to any other science. In fact, I would propose that our academic brothers look to us, the teachers, scientists and practitioners in sports, as an example of both the universality and the social application of science. Whereas in other scientific fields the time between discovery and application can often be quite long, the application of scientific breakthroughs in sports find their application in use with amazing speed.

This is our opportunity and our glory in sport. It is our time and our obligation to use this power of sport to better the world and bring all peoples together to share, learn and improve the life of all. This is my call to all of you here. To always keep this concept in your mind as you work in the field of Sports, Physical Education and Applied Sciences. Understand the social good you are doing in each action you take. This is how important the field of sports is to the world and to the individual societies that make up our world. Always remember this importance in your work. There can be no argument that sport is powerful. I would maintain that it is the most powerful universally shared social behavior in history.

What I have just addressed can be called the 'macro view' of sport, a worldview. Let me speak to how this worldview applies to the 'micro view' or more individual view of our mission in sports.

We are all aware that in recent years many sports have suffered a number of scandals for a variety of reasons and as a result of a variety of methods. These scandals are not the exclusive travesty of the United States, but the entire world has been tainted by these tragedies in sports. I will also maintain to you, my friends, that in these tragedies it is not the athletes alone who are responsible for the scars they have left on the sport they betrayed. In every one of the actions that has soiled sports there has been trainers, coaches, advisors, doctors, therapists, or some sports professional that is also culpable. These professionals who serve the athlete at the very least turned a cheek to the athlete's misdeeds and at the very most were the ones accountable for that athlete being led down the path of disrespecting their sport. We must face this fact as educators and professionals who serve the field of sports. We must look in the mirror when these tragedies occur and we must blame ourselves for these failures. We have failed. We haven't spoken up enough. We haven't prepared our sport enough. We haven't taught enough and we haven't modeled enough of the values that should run through each sport, every athlete, every coach and every professional that participates in sports. It is our duty in every training session, in every coaching session, in every practice, in every game, in every preparation and in every rehabilitation treatment to bring ethical values, honest and lawful practices to the athlete, the team and the sport. If we vow to only participate in sports with those

ideals and practices that obey the rules we will minimize these scandals and tragedies. My fellow professionals and educators make that vow today and every day that you work in the field of sports-which every action you do is with integrity and by the rules. The age of innocence in sports is over. Because of these scandals, the cheating and the abuses, societies will be looking more closely at sports and those who participate in them in all capacities. Be mindful of this, you owe this to your professional field.

Let me focus this micro view of sports onto an even tighter view into our own homes and families. In my work as a psychologist helping troubled families and young people with problems, I have used sports, physical fitness, and nutrition as tools to help heal families. Physical activity helps heal emotional turmoil, discharge negative feelings, prevents violence and serious mental illness. These facts are well documented in the scientific literature as well as in my personal clinical case files. Channeling young people's energy into sports and physical activity is a powerful tool I have used my entire career as a clinician. In my latest book, *Family Fit*, I detail how any family can use sports and physical fitness to bond closer together. They accomplish this unity by being active together in physical activity and through better nutrition. After all, what family member at any age doesn't want to look better and feel better? Sports can be a powerful tool to help individuals and families as much as it can help whole societies. Use this tool liberally. As you use it uses do so with INTEGRITY. Remember that as much as sports and physical activity can help emotional and behavior problems, it has the power to hurt as well. Abusive coaching behaviors, punitive techniques, removing the joy from sports and physical activity all can turn a young person away from a lifestyle that includes sports as a part of a healthy, balanced life. There have been many young people that I have met and have treated over the years who's path in life turned destructive, often filled with drug abuse, delinquency, dropping out of school or all of these because of negative experiences while participating in sports. Common examples are: being unfairly eliminated from a team, a cruel, abusive coach, coaching the team at a level that takes the fun out of playing the game, bullying and teasing players, overly emphasizing winning, playing favorites among the players, making a youth play with an injury and not playing the individual in the game after they have been hard working and loyal in practices. I have also witnessed many cases of gifted athletes who achieved much success in their sport only to eliminate sports and physical fitness from their lifestyle because their experience in their playing days was filled with negativity, poor adult modeling and punitive techniques. A youth's participation in sports should set an example of physical fitness as a lifelong habit, a pleasurable part of a full, well balanced life, not an isolated activity of one's school days or youth. We who teach and serve in sports must reverse the trend of how many young people give up a lifetime of regular physical activity and fitness. By doing this we will also reverse the

epidemic of childhood obesity that is spreading throughout the world. It is well documented by health officials in every corner of the planet that the lack of physical activity by young people is a leading cause of this obesity epidemic. Keeping integrity in sports and physical fitness will keep young people participating.

If we are to preserve the integrity of sports we have an obligation to ensure that participation is fair, respectful, value based, and a good experience for all who we are entrusted to serve. Every instance when we violate these values at the individual level adds to the corruption of the power of sports at the societal level. I ask you to make this pledge of serving with integrity.

Finally, as I return to my privileged worldview of sports I want to leave everyone listening to these remarks with a positive message. We are drawn to sports as athletes and as professionals for many reasons. It is important that you examine your personal reasons for embarking on a career in sports, no matter in what capacity you will serve sports. If the field of sports is the right choice for your life's work I am here to say to you that this is a time of great potential to work in this field. The world's economies have been in a very strenuous time in the last several years and many industries have been hit hard with strife. I stand here to tell you that the sports industry as a whole has been relatively recession resistant throughout this worldwide economic struggle. A vast majority of the segments that make up the sports industry throughout the world have shown significant growth during these tough economic times. Sports stand as one of the only industries that can boast of this economic growth. For many of you who study sports this come as no surprise because of sport's deep integration into the fabric of societies around the globe and because of the power of sports to be an escape in the worst of times. Even in this area of economics, sports flexes its muscle with a power that is unmatched by other elements of society and this power is worldwide.

I hope I have impressed you that the field of sports wields unequalled power as an element of a society. This power has great Opportunities for Fulfillment as long as we preserve its Integrity to keep it strong. The traditional purposes of presentations like mine here today are a call and a challenge for the Congress to go forth and advance the study and practice in this field. I hope I brought you this worldview to encourage you all to do just that. Thank you again for the honor of being in front of you in this important moment in time.

## **History of Certification in Professional Practice**

### *Medical Licensure*

The most accepted and recognized need for certification of professionals is in the field of healthcare. Not many people would argue that doctors and allied healthcare providers should be certified (qualified-see discussion below) to be allowed to care for patients. What professionals in other fields may not realize is that medical doctors'

journey to accreditation was a path as long, if not longer than many other occupations and professions' struggles. Medical licensure had its beginning in Europe before the colonization of the United States but wasn't automatically adopted in the American colonies. There was an effort to conduct examinations for practitioners in individual American colonies in the 1760s. The New Jersey Medical Society, first chartered in 1766, was the first organization of medical professionals in the United States. By the 1800s the medical societies were in charge of establishing regulations, standards of practice and certification of doctors. These medical societies began to develop their own medical schools with these society affiliated training programs called proprietary medical colleges. One of the first of the proprietary medical colleges was the medical college of the Medical Society of the County of New York founded in 1807. The influence of these medical societies grew in light of the prevailing attitude of the early American government to refuse to become involved in the regulation of services provided to its citizens. The influence of the medical societies peaked in the first half of the nineteenth century and in May 1847 representatives of 40 medical societies, 28 medical colleges from 22 states and the District of Columbia met and formed the American Medical Association (AMA) (Sigerist, 1935). It wasn't until after the Civil War, which highlighted the extremes in the competencies of medical practitioners did the movement resume to have government regulate the qualifications to become a doctor. The state of Texas established the first modern medical licensing authority in 1873 and by the turn of the century nearly all states had established licensing boards and examinations. (Derbyshire, 1969)

By the twentieth century all states in the U.S. required an examination to obtain a license to practice medicine but these examinations varied widely from an interview only to a rigorous multifaceted examination with written, oral, practical examination and observation of clinical skills. Because of this wide variation in state's examinations, reciprocity by another state of a doctor's credentials was rare. With improved transportation and the internal migration of citizens across the United States a groundswell movement rose up in the early 1900s to have a national examination. The first proposal to have a national examination appeared in 1902 and the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) was founded in 1915. The first national examination was conducted in 1916. The first NBME examinations were grueling weeklong testing marathons consisting of essay, laboratory, oral, practical and bedside components. The NBME was restructured over the decades, but it wasn't until the 1980's that all components of the NBME were in multiple-choice format. In the early 1990's unification of the NBME examinations and refinement led to the development of the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE). Now all medical licensing jurisdictions accept USMLE scores as the certification standard for physicians. (Hubbard & Levit, 1985)



Specialty board certification is the process by which a physician in the United States demonstrates by written, practical and/or computer based testing, mastery of knowledge and skills that define a particular area of medical specialization. The American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) established in 1933 is a not-for-profit organization assists 24 approved medical specialty boards in the development and use of standards in the ongoing evaluation and certification of physicians. The ABMS now certifies physicians in 150 specialties and sub-specialties. Medical specialty certification in the United States is a voluntary process. While medical licensure sets the minimum competency requirements to diagnose and treat patients, board certification demonstrates a physician's exceptional expertise in a particular specialty and/or sub-specialty of medical practice. The need for certification in medical profession specialties developed as a natural offshoot of physician licensing as professional practice in healthcare developed. Specialty board certification allows practitioners with specialties to practice under the broad umbrella of medical practice rather than branch off and forming fractional groups with little or no unity and less influence (NBME, 2011).

#### *Certification in Non-Physician Professions*

Professional Certification or qualification is a designation earned by a person to assure competency to perform professional duties. It is important to note that not all certifications that use post-nominal letters are an acknowledgement of educational achievement, or an agency sponsorship to safeguard the public interest. Often with these certifications, an individual simply pays a fee to a business that created a certification and then calls themselves, 'certified'. The existence of these certifications is increasing with the use of the Internet and the acceptance of the distance-learning model. These fee-only certifications do not fit into any of the theoretical models of licensure/certification that will be discussed below and are not a subject in the analysis in this article.

Most certification programs are created, sponsored, or affiliated with professional associations or trade organizations interested in raising standards and not created by the government. Even those programs that are completely independent from professional associations and trade organizations often enjoy the support and endorsement of these associations and organizations.

The growth of certification programs is also a reaction to the changing employment market. Certifications are portable, since they do not depend on one company's definition of a certain job. As the workplace changed from employing workers who spent their entire careers in one workplace to more mobility of workers, certifications became an asset to a professional's career and to the employers. Certification is generally intended to be an impartial, third-party endorsement of an individual's professional knowledge and experience; therefore, they are not specific to just one workplace.

Two major organizations based in the United States oversee standards for organizations that grant credentials to individual professionals. These are The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and the Institute of Credentialing Excellence (ICE). The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) defines the requirements of meeting the ANSI standard for being a certifying organization. According to ANSI, a professional certifying organization must meet two requirements: 1-Deliver an assessment based on industry knowledge, independent from training courses or course providers. 2 Grant a time-limited credential to anyone who meets the assessment standards (ANSI, 2012).

The Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE) is a US -based organization that sets standards for accreditation of certification programs based on the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (APA, AERA, and NCME) (ICE, 2012).

### **Theories of Licensure/Certification and Empirical Rigor**

Researchers have studied the licensure/certification process for some time studying the need for certification in some professions while others do not seem to require certification or licensure. Three different theories have been studied as to the efficacy of licensure/certification of an occupational group. These are: The Capture Theory, which explains that a profession or occupation 'captures' regulation to insure that they restrict others from performing the tasks and therefore increase the need and incomes of the professionals regulated. The Public Interest Theory, which explains that professional regulation is established for the good of society to insure quality services. And the Political Economy Theory, which explains that both public interest and professional interests are the reasons a profession establishes regulation. The majority of studies conclude that the Political Economy Theory best explains why professions establish regulations (Blair, 1980; Carroll, 1981; Frech, 1996; Friedman, 1962; Graddy, 1991; Kleiner, 2006; Maurizi, 1974; Moore, 1961; Olsen, 1999; Peltzman, 1976; Posner, 1974, 1981; White, 1979).

### **Sports Professionals-Schools-Institutions and the Need for Accreditation/Certification**

In analysis of the past literature on the development of professional regulation in professional fields and considering Political Economy Theory as a viable explanation of why an occupation should regulate their practices, sports with its great power in societies and influence globally warrants the establishment of regulation of the professionals that serve this industry. A professional in sports meets the test of both insuring quality of services for the public good and the 'capture'(Capture Theory-above) of professionals who deliver services to the field of sports. The complexities in techniques needed to serve sports, along with the knowledge of rules and regulations in sports and knowledge of the relationship between the athlete and the team,

general public, institution they play for and other affiliated parties require the sports professional and the school or sports training program to have a competency that is beyond their standard training curriculum. The accreditation by The International Sports Professionals Association-ISPA was developed to fill this need for regulation in this field (ISPA, 2012).

The ISPA is the largest and oldest such accreditation body in the world now credentialing professionals, students and schools/institutions on every continent on the planet (ISPA, 2012).

For both the individual sports professional and a school/sports institution, the accreditation process requires an audit of experience, education, training and character. Although an ISPA accreditation as an individual sports professional does not require that professional to take an examination, the ISPA has developed certification program that requires examination in the area of healthcare workers in workers' compensation cases. This is the Certified Workers' Compensation Healthcare Provider certification-CWcHP. (25) The CWcHP is a widely accepted accreditation and is not directly related to ISPA's sports accreditation programs, but did arise out of the need to certify those professionals working with the injured industrial athlete and other injured workers. (ISPA, 2010) The ISPA is a member of ICE and accredited itself to administer certifications.

ISPA certifications were developed with the same philosophical orientation as the Political Economy Theory of professional regulation, that is, regulation is in the service of the public well-being and also protects and advances the good of the profession.

Lastly, it is the position of this author as mentioned in the keynote address that began this article, that if the professional's service in sports is to advance and become as respected as it is in other fields, advanced accreditation of professionals and schools is a valuable tool in this journey.

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